

REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge receipt of the Office Action dated April 14, 2009. In that action, the Examiner: (1) rejected claims 125-128 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,273,634 to Lohbeck (“Lohbeck”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,409,175 to Evans et al. (“Evans”); and (2) allowed claims 129-131, 133, 142-144, 148 and 151-163. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the claim amendments above and the following remarks.

ALLOWED CLAIMS

Applicants appreciate the allowance of claims 129-131, 133, 142-144, 148 and 151-163.

CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claim 125 as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Evans. However, Lohbeck teaches a sleeve 6/16 that includes a series of holes or apertures for receiving the locking screws 11/21. Such apertures, along with the relatively moveable screws, allow fluid leakage and negatively affect a fluid seal in the interface between the sleeve and the tubular members. Accordingly, Applicants amend claim 125 to include an “aperture-free” sleeve.

Furthermore, Evans teaches a seal ring located in a channel formed in the threaded interface between two tubular members. Applicants are unclear how Evans teaches such a seal arrangement that would provide a fluid tight seal at the non-threaded interfaces between the relatively smooth, cylindrical surfaces of the sleeves and tubulars in Lohbeck. Additionally, Evans teaches that radial expansion of the connection is required to expand the seal ring for sealing. Thus, it is unclear how Evans teaches a fluid tight seal before or during radial expansion.

For at least these reasons, claim 125 is distinguished from and allowable over the cited art. Claims 126-128 are also allowable at least because they depend from claim 125.

CLAIM 109

Claim 109 was listed as withdrawn by the Examiner on page 2 of the Office Action, but Applicants respectfully submit that claim 109 is not withdrawn and is allowable in line with other allowed claims.

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REJOINDER OF CLAIMS

Applicants respectfully request that all claims identified as "Withdrawn", "Withdrawn-currently amended" or "Withdrawn-previously presented" be reconsidered for rejoinder under MPEP § 821.04. Where appropriate, Applicants have amended these claims to be properly rejoined under MPEP § 821.04.

More particularly, claim 54 is amended to depend from allowed claim 144. Claim 110 is amended to depend from allowed claim 130. Claim 121 is amended to have a scope commensurate with allowed claim 144. Claim 132 is amended to depend from allowed claim 130. Claims 134-141 are amended to depend from allowed claim 144. Claims 145-147, 149 and 150 are amended to depend from allowed claim 129. New claims 164-167 are added to claim an apparatus commensurate in scope with amended and now allowable claims 125-128.

Allowed claim 154 is amended simply to further claim the invention and add the feature of claim 155.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. No new matter is introduced by way of amendment. In the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), and any fees required are hereby authorized to be charged to USPTO Deposit Account Number 03-2769 (2725-09305).

Respectfully submitted,

/Matt Moscicki/
Matthew R. Moscicki
Reg. No. 57,524
CONLEY ROSE, P.C.
P. O. Box 3267
Houston, Texas 77253-3267
(713) 238-8000 (Phone)
(713) 238-8008 (Facsimile)
ATTORNEY FOR APPLICANTS